ED 155 941 THE COMMUNITY IS OUR CLASSROOM. TEAL OCCASIONAL PAPERS, VOL. 1, 1977.

1 OF 1 NICOL, MARJORIE; JORDAN, GAIL BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE, VANCOUVER. 77 6P.

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 941 FL 009 560

AUTHOR Nicol, Marjorie; Jordan, Gail
TITLE The Community is Our Classroom. TEAL Occasional Papers, Vol. 1, 1977.
INSTITUTION British Columbia Association of Teachers of English as an Additional Language, Vancouver.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM Maureen C. Sawkins, British Columbia Association of TEAL, c/o King Edward Campus, V.C.C., 2750 Oak St., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada ($2.50 Canadian plus $.50 postage)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Involvement; Elementary Education; *English (Second Language); Experiential Learning; *Field Trips; *Instructional Trips; *Language Instruction; Language Programs; Program Descriptions; School Community Programs; School Community Relationship; Second Language Learning; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS British Columbia; Canada

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses an English as a second language (ESL) program for elementary school children in a city school in British Columbia. The main emphasis of this program is on community life outside the classroom. The students are taken on field trips to a wide variety of places, such as an aquarium, grocery stores, parks, skating rinks, swimming pools, shopping centers, public libraries, and museums. Sometimes the community comes to the classroom; there are visits, for example, from a policeman, someone from the Public Health Department, and a representative of UNICEF. The students in an ESL class need shared experiences to talk about, and these field trips and other community experiences create a meaningful framework for discussion. (CFM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED155941

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Maureen C. Sawkins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE COMMUNITY IS OUR CLASSROOM

Marjorie Nicol and Gail Jordan

From 'Day One' we expand our classroom from the four walls to the community which is virtually never-ending in its variety of places to visit. The first or second day we usually start with a visit to the local grocery store. Food is universal in its appeal, and without exception, the children are interested in the English words for familiar as well as unfamiliar foods. We're on good terms with the grocer because he knows that we stress "**LOOK** - DON'T TOUCH." This is the first of many such visits to the community, so we make sure each child understands this basic rule of courtesy. From this short visit many classroom activities can evolve. The conversation the following day will be simple and to the point:

A. Where did we go yesterday?

B. We went to the grocery store.

A. Where is the grocery store?

B. It's at 41st and Main.

This conversation isn't one which came from a book. It's a meaningful conversation about something they actually did. And there are already structural and grammatical possibilities:

Went	--	did go
What kind of store	--	a grocery store
Question word	--	where
Location	--	41st and Main
Contraction	--	it is

For vocabulary development we would use the many fruits, vegetables, meat, canned goods and other products that they saw. Again, these didn't come from a book - they saw them. We use pictures for reinforcement, but the real food came first!

We are fortunate in our central city location. From our school we can start out in all directions and find something new to explore

FL009560

each time. Within walking distance we have parks, a skating rink, a swimming pool, a large shopping centre with a public library, two secondary schools and a community centre. We have visited all of these places during the school year with little or no cost to the class except a little shoe leather.

Our longer jaunts have often been by city bus and this serves two purposes: it gets us from A to B inexpensively, and the students become accustomed to bus routes and the whole bus-taking procedure.

Another valuable field trip was the Royal Hudson train ride to Squamish. This involved discussions of maps, distances, transportation, simple railroad terminology, and a bit of history as the Royal Hudson excursion is a "trip down memory lane."

Wednesday afternoons, fall and spring, became swimming afternoons at the nearby indoor pool. The first experience in a large swimming pool can be a frightening one, but we have never had a student refuse to enter the water. They gain confidence quickly and some of them are soon swimming well. Later, in the winter months, the skating rink opens, and they have a choice of swimming with Mrs. Nicol or skating with Mrs. Jordan.

Early in the year, we visit the branch library nearest us. Each student is given his own library card, and from then on we visit the library monthly to return books and to choose new ones. Hopefully this library habit will be one which stays with them in years to come.

As a few of our older students will be attending secondary schools soon, we try to orient them and the rest of the class to the secondary school situation. We have two secondary schools near us, and we welcome their invitations to musical and artistic events as a gradual means of introducing the ESL students to other areas of school life.

Another departure from the classroom is to walk to a nearby park with an inexpensive camera and a roll of film. Each student takes a picture, arranging the other students to suit himself and trying to get them to pose. When the prints are brought to class, a good discussion on the simple techniques and problems of photography is easy to initiate and to sustain as each student has a personal interest in the pictures.

Bowling is another activity the community has to offer. In February we often begin to feel the need to get out of the classroom after days of inclement weather, so a brisk walk to the local bowling alley for an hour or so of bowling became the morning's activity. Not only does bowling foster good sportsmanship among students of such diverse backgrounds, communication of instructions and excitement is in English, score keeping becomes a small lesson in arithmetic, and the walk over can become a "scavenger hunt" of sorts, for as many articles as they can find beginning with any given letter.

Another field trip we made was our "winter experience in April." We reserved snowshoes through the School Board and took the class to Cypress Bowl where we spent the day in and on the snow.

A visit to the aquarium at Stanley Park in late April reaffirmed our position that field trips are one of the most beneficial of ESL techniques. By this time, the students were boarding buses confidently, making bus changes without incident, standing up to allow older people to sit, fielding questions put to them by interested on-lookers, and behaving well throughout the trip. Even the new students, by observing and following the example of the others, conducted themselves well. The feeling that we can take them almost anywhere can only come from repeated experiences in which correct behaviour has been stressed before, during and after the experience. This is not to imply that the class marches rigidly by twos - on the contrary, they can relax and enjoy themselves within the rules set up so that everyone - including the teachers - can enjoy themselves.

One of the most positive feelings we have had during the school year came most unexpectedly during our annual trip to Victoria in May. After a very informative and worthwhile visit to the Provincial Museum, we gathered our lunches and walked to Beacon Hill Park. After eating, the students had one of the best "plays" they had had during the school year. With a miniature football, two frisbees, a baseball, two mitts and a bat, they organized play which lasted well over an hour with everyone participating and everyone having a good time, with absolutely no thought being given to colour or creed. We felt that at long last the class had "arrived." Given twenty students aged nine through fourteen from such diverse places on the globe as Hong Kong, Japan, India, Borneo, Taiwan

and Chile, we found that it does indeed take nine months for good-will and brotherhood to be born, so that young people can play together simply as young people.

In January, we were fortunate to be the 'stars' in a six-week nutrition experiment using four rats from the UBC laboratories. The "rat experiment" came at a good time in the school year. It kept the ESL class busy and interested in school at a time of year when the weather is often bad and field trips are less convenient. As a fellow teacher so aptly put it, "When you can't go out into the community, the community comes to you." Mrs. Nicol had attended a nutrition workshop at the end of which she was asked if she would be interested in having the ESL class participate in an experiment. She agreed, and the experiment was underway.

When the four rats arrived in two cages, they were put into the library so the entire school population could observe the experiment. Two rats were to receive nutritionally good food for three weeks while the other two were to receive nutritionally poor food for the same time. At the end of three weeks we were to feed good food to the two on the poor diet and thus bring them to the same physical state as the other rats which had started on the good diet. Each day, two ESL students would be responsilbe for weighing, cleaning, watering and feeding the rats. The daily weight was recorded on a graphy nearby. The food was weighed, and the two on the poor diet were to get the same amount of food as the other two, but nutritionally poor food such as candy, cookies, chips, cheezies, jam and honey. The first week Mrs. Jordan accompanied the students to ensure that everything was done correctly, but she soon discovered that the students were quite capable of managing everything themselves. This little exercise gave the students a lot of confidence in themselves. They gained status in the eyes of the other students in the school, they learned to talk freely with the three young women from UBC who were conducting the experiment as a part of one of their courses, and to joke with the two young men from Capilano College who regularly appeared to record the experiment with camera and tape recorder for an audio-visual course they were taking. This slide-tape presentation is now available from the Special Education Office at the

Vancouver School Board or from the B.C. Dairy Foundation, which made it possible financially..

Other examples of the community coming to us were visits from Constable Kirk of the Vancouver City Police, who talked to us about traffic and bicycle safety; Miss McFarland of the Public Health Department who talked to us about dental hygiene and a representative of UNICEF, who talked to the students and presented a film on the work this organization is doing all over the world.

From these field trip experiences and forays into the community comes a feeling of something shared. A "regular" classroom has children who have been together before; who, for the most part, have lived in the same community; who know Stanley Park from school visits if not from family picnics; and who, at the very least, share the same language and cultural experiences.

The ESL class has to start from scratch. We need shared experiences so that we have something on which to hang the language, and this is where we rely so heavily on experiences outside the classroom. When we recall struggling through rain and cold weather, missing buses, finding a lost glove, calling a worried parent (who doesn't speak English), and doing the dozens of things which students and teachers share in their forays around the city, we have something to talk about that is meaningful to the entire class. The child who might be extremely shy in revealing family customs in India, feels much more comfortable talking about the time we went sliding down the hill in the snow and got our pants all wet.

In conclusion, we have tried to illustrate that teaching language does not have to be confined to the structured, stereotyped classroom approach. Using field trips and other experiences provided by the community as a teaching medium gives language an exciting new dimension and creates a meaningful framework for the ESL student.